


Ochita Kuroi Yūsha no Densetsu:Volume 1 Prologue

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Prologue : Sion Astal[\[edit\]](#)

While standing, the girl's face reddened as she blushed.

Her face showed that she seemed shy and nervous.

"Wh, what is it, suddenly saying something like this..."

After saying that once, she stopped talking.

Her face also became red.

Her expression became somewhat hesitant to speak, almost like crying, she also showed a 'wanting to run away' look right now.

Even so, she was determined to do something,

"You, you know, that... I, love you, Sion."

She, said so.

He thought while looking at her.

Looking at her long flaxen hair.

Looking at her transparent white skin which dyed bright red up to her ears, Sion Astal thought.

If it's now, I guess the time is still not right.

Obtaining a normal happiness, is not possible for me.

If I accept her modest love, in a way, the whole world will become perfect, Sion thought in an instant.

She was very beautiful.

Becoming his comrade upon entering this Roland Empire Royal Military Academy.

She is always cheerful, encouraging everyone, giving childlike smiles.

Surely if I accept her love, I think I will get used to simple happiness.

Even in this rotten country.

"....."

Even if the insane king, whose desire widened the division between nobles, governed this Roland Empire.

Loving a single girl, protecting her, if I were able to smile, that is, in a way, perfect.

What choice do I have, Sion thought for a moment.

What a troublesome thing, what am I afraid of in this world? He thought so in the moment.

But, still.



"....."

Sion kindly smiled, refusing her love gently.



To be in a relationship with a beautiful girl like you, I don't deserve it.

I'm the king of Roland's illegitimate son, the other princes had my life targeted. If I go out with you, the danger will fall upon you too. Because of that, we can't go out currently.

However, I really like you.

Even though you are truly charming.

But currently.

Because now is not the time, I can't go out with anyone yet.

Refusal phrase like that, he had prepared many of them.

Each time someone showed their affection, he would choose one of them.

Afterwards, the girl showed a tearful face. No matter which girl, they would show a tearful face. Then immediately, as I thought, I don't suit Sion after all, do I? A smile floated on her tearful face.

"....."

Seeing those girls' smiling face, Sion really hated himself.

The truth is, I actually want to accept that love too.

I'm merely a seventeen year-old boy, there's no way I'm not happy being confessed to by a girl.

This girl is nice, and beautiful, if we're together it would be fun, it's impossible to not desire it.

But, even so.

"....."

He rejected those girls' feelings.

Those girls' feelings which made them muster their courage to confess, he trampled on it.

Until I change, this crazy country.

Until I change, this country which treats people like they are trash.

His mother was discarded like trash, and until he took revenge on those guys who called her a lowlife dog, he couldn't possibly stop progressing.

But, instead, he promised.

In the future I create, you will be able to smile for sure.

Then, certainly you will also find a better man than me, marry him, have children, live in happiness.

You should live with a smile forever.

If by any chance that partner is, might even be me, that is well, I don't understand either.

But, because I promised.

Because I promised, to create that kind of world.

That's why until that day, would you accompany me?

Would you fight together with me?

If you follow me, you will definitely get hurt.

But it's fine.

I will show you that I would protect you without fail.

So Sion, promised.

Female, male, he asked them to become his comrade, he really promised anybody.

Then, he showed them his dream.

To those who followed him.

The result.

At a little distant place, Sion Astal found a mountain of corpses.

Within those corpses, Sion found the face of the girl who recently said she loved him.

Her face was distorted by fear. Her large eyes which looked like they were asking for help were open, looking at him. Of course, there were no lights in those pupils.

"....."

He thought to at least close her eyes, however, Sion shook his head.

Because the mountain of corpses there were all his comrades, closing all of their eyes was impossible.

He already knew the number of the dead.

One hundred and seventeen people.

All of them, when they were Roland Empire Royal Military Academy's students, were comrades who entrusted their life to Sion, that life Sion had promised, to supposedly protect without fail.

Yet, what was the result?

What was the result?

And so, he heard a questioning voice in his head. In a condemning-like tone, the questioning voice could be heard.

"....."

However, Sion didn't say anything.

He just simply stared directly at the mountain of corpses.

Nobility could be felt from his silver hair, and strong determination enveloped his golden pupils. He had always hid his dazzling radiance inside of him. No one could help being captivated, by that powerful light.

Being called a terrible lowlife dog, born from a lowly woman, it's almost unthinkable that he had such a fascinating light.

Inherited the blood of this country's extremely insane king, it's almost unthinkable that he had a bright light.

Anyone who were captivated by that light, would be completely like a flies diving into fire, and couldn't help but show their dreams to him.

Maybe.

Maybe if it's him, wouldn't he be able to change this corrupted world?

But now,

"....."

The powerful light that should be hidden inside him froze a little of his sadness, regret, and despair. He doesn't believe he has enough power to change the world at all, his empty pupils simply gazed at the mountain of corpses.

Fahl's corpse.

Tyle's corpse.

Toni's corpse.

The one who said she love him and had blushed, that girl's corpse.

The comrades who should've shown their dreams to him, their remains.

All of them over there were the fragments of comrades who, until just the other day, went to the same academy, taking tests together in the classroom, and laughing like idiots.

All of them, were frightened of war.

When informed that the Roland Empire and Kingdom of Estabul had started a war once again, they shivered in fear.

However at that time, Sion spoke.

To his comrades who were crying, trembling because they might die, Sion said :

"It's alright. We won't die in this war."

To his comrades who were shivering in fear, he said so.

"If you follow me, it will be alright. I will arrange so all of my comrades are assigned to one unit. Additionally, the unit we entered will also nearly not get involved in battle at all. We will be dispatched to a remote region. Therefore, don't worry. You guys will not die in this war."

Hearing that, everyone made a face that looked like they're seeing a dream. Staring at Sion, making face as if they have seen the dream inside him.

Then after that, Sion spoke.

—Hey? Following me is a good thing, right?

With an awful face, Sion spoke.

—Hey? Following me is a good thing, right?

The result.

"....."

The comrades who came with him and survived, were only three people.

Three people, out of one hundred and twenty.

Ryner, Kiefer, and Sion made up those 3 people.

Sion turned around.

Then he checked the current situation.

The battlefield was over there.

That's also where the battle was the most intense, the frontline.

No, in fact, this place should be a worthless remote region, and shouldn't have turned into the frontline. There is no castle, no fortress, no army storehouse, no town or village, besides from being too far to be a base to attack Roland's center, it is simply a mere spread of plain fields and forest, a place which had nothing of value.

There is truly no military purpose from obtaining this place here among all the other battlefield, this place should be the safest.

However, Estabul's strongest unit that should be dispatched to the most important battlefield, appeared.

The Kingdom of Estabul's Mage Knight Battalion.

Carrying a huge scythe, like a grim reaper, with body wrapped in crimson armor, those monsters didn't capture anyone and continued to slaughter Sion's comrades in front of his eyes.

At that Sion cried out, *Why?*

Why did Estabul's Mage Knight Battalion appear in this remote region?, he exclaimed.

However, the reason was simple.

He was trapped.

By his brothers.

This is because, despite being the son of a lowlife dog and having low social status, he had the filthy blood of the king of this country flowing within him.

That same royal blood also flowed inside them, that's why it's unforgivable.

Therefore, die.

Die like trash.

However, unaware of that, Sion spoke like an idiot.

Hey? Following me is a good thing right?

Using the network within the military that he thought he spent a long time to create, he and his comrades, would not be exposed to battle, dispatched to a safe remote region, they completely trusted Sion.

The truth is, that was all a trap.

Inside the network that he thought was perfect, there was a traitor.

Sion was unaware of that.

"....This mess."

Sion muttered softly

After that, he saw the figures of his comrades who survived from inside the jaws of death.

One of them, made a face even emptier than Sion's.

With messy black bed hair, that tall and lean figure stooped.

Ryner Lute.

He gazed at his feet with dark eyes which were about to cry.

At his feet, an abnormal spectacle had spread. People were shattered, smashed, or disintegrated into sand.

All of them had massacred Sion's comrades, confronted by an overwhelming power, Estabul's Mage Knight Battalion's corpses—were beyond recognition.

The one who did this was Ryner.

No, something inside Ryner's eyes did it.

Sion stared at Ryner. Afterwards, at the center of his blank, dark eyes which were about to cry, a bright red pentacle emerged.

It was called «Alpha Stigma», a cursed legacy.

That cursed eyes went berserk just now.

And then, the Mage Knight Battalion were annihilated in an instant. Rampaging around like crazy, he was even about to kill his comrades, Sion and Kiefer.

"....Again."

He said no more than that. With a regretful and almost crying voice, he murmured.

At that, Sion looked away from Ryner.

And looked at the other person.

About to fall on her backside to the ground, the figure of one girl who fell silent.

Kiefer Knolles.

With her short-cut red hair and also her red eyes that always look determined. But now, from that eyes of her, tears were flowing.

Tormented by the Mage Knight Battalion, watching the rampaging Ryner nearly killed her, her whole body was covered in wounds.

However, what tormented her now was not the pain of those wounds.

The reason why she was crying was because all of her comrades died.

Furthermore, they died because of her betrayal.

Kiefer was Estabul's spy. On her mission, she informed the Mage Knights that Sion and his comrades were here, and they were attacked as a result.

By selling intelligence to Estabul, Kiefer betrayed Sion, Ryner, and her comrades.

However, why did she do something like that?

For the Estabul's Mage Knights, something like the life of the king's illegitimate son was not significant at all. This remote region was not worthy to obtain at all either.

So why did the Estabul's Mage Knights attack this location with the intel from Kiefer?

That reason is simple if you think about it a little.

Kiefer also betrayed her homeland, Estabul.

Probably, Roland's nobles and Sion's brothers held her weakness, so to kill Sion, and annihilate Estabul's Mage Knight Battalion, she had received both missions.

Thus, hell had been waiting.

Kiefer's betrayal, resulted the death of her comrades, moreover Ryner also went berserk, and the Mage Knight Battalion also perished.

And now, in her surroundings, only corpses remained.

Corpse to her right.

Corpse to her left.

Corpse, corpse, corpse, corpse, corpse.

And then, the one who failed to prevent this hell,

"...is me"

Sion, said that.

I was in the position to prevent all of this. No, I had the duty to prevent it. Because I promised. To everyone. Because I said if you follow me it would be alright. I will protect you without fail. I will change the world.

"....."

It's a terrible joke. A weak guy like me, how can I change the world?

Whose sadness did I stop?

Sion spoke.

Toward the crying Kiefer.

Toward Ryner who kept blaming himself.

I said it wasn't necessary. Since the one who should take blame, all of it, is me.

Sion said.

"Becoming your comrade is my fault too. Tyle, Toni, Fahl....the death of my comrades is my fault as well. The war that happened is also....I'm not the king now...."

In the middle of hell, Sion said so.

However, those words were not transmitted to the other two. Each of them kept blaming themselves.

The three who survived were all feeling guilty.

I'm the worst.

Sion thought so.

I have brought my comrades to the worst place, Sion blamed himself.

A loud earth-shaking sound originated from afar.

In the direction of that sound, Sion turned his head. Far beyond the prairie. At a place still barely visible from a distance, raising a cloud of sand, a marching large army could be seen coming.

The large army had the national flag of Roland Empire set up.

Nonchalantly appearing in Roland's remote region, it was the large army whose purpose was to obliterate Estabul's Mage Knight Battalion who were deceived by Kiefer.

Army.

Group of soldiers.

A group organized only to kill people.

Seeing that, Ryner said.

"Worthless."

He muttered in small voice.

At that, Sion,

"....."

As expected, he didn't say anything, however, his thoughts were the same as Ryner's.

Worthless.

Too worthless.

Everything is worthless.

Now, the unfolding scene in front of their eyes, was nothing but worthless things enough to make them disgusted.

War, desire, betrayal, despair, death.

Even though anyone understood nothing will be born from such things, I keep walking, only to lose. I just lost what is important to me, everyone would understand if I just cry and shout.

Nevertheless, the world won't stop.

If someone does not stop it, the world would continue rotating like this, with desire, betrayal, and despair as its gears.

Worthless, that murmur escaped from him.

Losing what is important to me is frightening, that words escaped from him.

"....."

And my future too, will full of losing.

Sion stretched out his spine.

At his back, he was burdened with the mountain of corpses of his comrades, even so Sion stretched out his spine with a *pin*.

"...And yet, I..."

Approaching the large army.

An army released by Roland. Are they enemies or allies? He didn't know that. Are they a subordinate of Sion's brothers who want to kill him? Or, a partner who can discover a little chance of winning? He didn't know that.

But even so, it couldn't afford to break his heart.

Because, he had promised.

If you follow me, consequently I will show that I would protect you without fail.

If you follow me, consequently I will show you a new world.

One promise...is broken already.

But, I won't allow both promise to be broken,

That's why he straightened himself. His sharp golden eyes stared at the large army. Furthermore earlier, he anticipated the future. Inside of Sion at that time, the light returned once again.

No one could help being captivated, by that powerful light.

Enough to change the world, was that powerful light.

Then, Sion spoke.

Burdened by the death of his comrades as it was,

"....Even so, I will keep moving forward."

Thus, Sion Astal's real struggle had begun.

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Ochita Kuroi Yūsha no Densetsu:Volume 1 Chapter 2

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Chapter 2: Red Steel[\[edit\]](#)

Inside his head, Claugh Klom could vividly remember the memories of what his mother had told him back then.

"You're different... You're different from other children, a special child..."

Incidentally, while his mother was saying that, she coughed up blood.

Bright red blood.

A large amount of blood.

His drug-filled mother's blood.

But the reason his mother was coughing up blood wasn't because of drug abuse.

She was always defending her drugs, pulling out the weeds and burning them and inhaling them in such a crude manner, saying that if they were poisonous and dangerous, that was all the more reason to take them.

When the drugs wore off, she'd go mad and become violent, horribly beating Claugh, who was no older than five years old, but while under the influence of the drugs, she was calm.

And today, she'd hit him for a while before taking the drugs.

He'd watched motionlessly.

As she did her drugs, her mood improved and she refrained from hitting him. That was an ordinary day for him.

Today's amount of drugs hadn't changed from the usual. So as he thought, the fact that right now, before his eyes, his mother was crying while coughing up blood wasn't due to the drugs.

"... You're special..."

Claugh watched his mother who continued to murmur that. He watched as more blood flew from her mouth. Even as a child, he understood that the amount of blood was fatal. Perhaps that was why he thought that that would remain as his most vivid memory.

The red that was coughed out of his mother, thin and pale due to the drugs.

If you mixed blue and red, what colour would you get?

"... Special... You're special..."

His mother kept muttering that. With a vacant look on her face, she kept muttering that.

Special, special, special, special.

However, Claugh didn't know what was so special about him. His talking was a bit more advanced than other

children's, he could read and write faster than other children—there were certainly those things, but he didn't think those made him special.

At the very least, he didn't think they were worth mentioning repeatedly while on the verge of death.

But his mother spoke.

"You're special... You're special..."

With a blue face.

While coughing up blood.

She continued to mutter what could only be called a curse.

A blue and red curse of blackness.

Those three colours wrap themselves around Claugh.

"... So... So you must live."

His mother said that.

Claugh didn't say anything. Sensing the aura of death from the blood she coughed out, he didn't say anything.

His mother was going to die.

His mother, who fell apart from the drugs and hit him everyday, was going to die.

His mother, whom he wished each and every day would disappear, was finally going to die.

In front of his mother, Claugh said,

"... Don't die, Mom."

He cried deeply.

But his mother said,

"Special... You're a special child... So, so you must survive... You must get revenge..."

Those kinds of words.

And she laughed. She suddenly laughed madly.

"Ha... haha... hahaha!? Yes, that's it! You'll get revenge for me! Against that man—you'll exact revenge against that man..."

But her words stopped there.

From behind, an arrow flew and pierced her throat, as more blood spewed out. Despite that, she continued to laugh.

While dripping blood from her throat, she continued to laugh.

"Ahahahahahahaha!"

An arrow hit her right shoulder.

"Ahahahahahahaha!"

From behind, an arrow flew towards her stomach.

"Ahahahahahahaha... It doesn't hurt, because of the drugs, it doesn't hurt... Now, kill me! Kill me! But remember this: Claugh will—to you, Claugh will definitely..."

An arrow pierced the middle of her back. Like that, her laughing voice stopped. Then, she looked down at Claugh with a self-deprecating and despairing face.

"Got it? You're a special child. So that I would give birth to you, this was done to my body... and now I'll be killed. I'll be killed as my sin for escaping with you. It's all your fault. My life was ruined because of you. That's why you must at least live, no matter what. Live, live, keep living, and you'll..."

Another arrow pierced her back. She looked at that, and as she coughed up more blood, she laughed, and then spoke.

"... Get revenge against this rotten world..."

It was definitely one.

As he thought, it was a curse.

In that moment, a curse was placed on Claugh.

Surely, a blue and black curse.

Coughing up blood one last time, his mother died. She collapsed into Claugh's arms. Claugh took one step back, looking down at the corpse. His mother's corpse.

Despite all his sadness, he didn't cry, for some reason.

Is it because of the curse?

"... Revenge..."

Claugh muttered.

Then he lifted his face.

Right now, he was in a small, wooden house. In a poor village, it was the house his poor mother had grown up in. A room littered with drugs and trash. In the kitchen, there was a mountain of dirty dishes.

And over there, outside the broken window.

Where the arrows that'd broken the window were being fired from.

Claugh looked over there.

Outside the window were about ten or so men on horses, yelling in strange voices while swinging their swords and firing arrows as they killed the fleeing villagers.

"... Thieves, huh?"

Or bandits?

He didn't think it was the army. While the soldiers of nobles often came to villages to plunder them like thieves,

"The army stopped using bows a long time ago. After all, the soldiers' training and efficiency, along with magic's precision, are greater than bows."

Claugh recited the information he'd acquired from books. Then he directed his gaze towards the large bookshelf in the living room.

"... You're a special child, after all..."

Regarding those words that were muttered, he thought of how his mother told him to read the books on that bookshelf.

All these books that his poor mother didn't have the money to buy—no, all these books that their depopulated village couldn't afford.

Why are these here in this house?

Claugh had asked his mother that, to which she replied that so that the Clough-kun with a sharp mind could read, the village's people had donated them.

But that was rather strange.

The information that he acquired from reading those books didn't impact his and his mother's daily life.

Were the people of this village, living in poverty, idiots?

That, or they were ridiculously soft-hearted...

"....."

Again, Clough looked at the thieves outside the window.

And he remembered what his mother, intoxicated with drugs, told him each day.

It was the story of her life up until then.

Born into poverty, sold by her parents on her seventeenth birthday and placed in a prison where she was confined for several days, filled with drugs and then raped so that she could produce a child.

But though she was experimented on in order to give birth to a monster, that monster was Clough.

It's your fault.

It's your fault that my life is a mess.

And after I snuck out of the facility, they've surely been searching for me. They're chasing after you. They're searching for you. But I was thinking about selling you. Like my parents did to me, like the world did to me, I would sell you and finally be happy.

Each and every day she said, smiling sadly at the end.

Claugh remembered that.

And he'd thought about how much of what she said was the truth.

But now, he understood the entire truth.

The mountain of books in the living room.

The refined drugs that could never have made it into a poor village like this.

And the movements of the thieves outside that were killing the villagers.

"....."

Judging by the bandits' behaviour, they were trained fighters.

Outside the window.

One bandit noticed Claugh. He made a face as if he'd found his prey. And he pulled back his bow.

From this distance, the chances that an arrow fired from someone without training would hit Claugh were low.

But.

As a sharp sound rang through the air, the arrow flew straight towards Claugh.

Claugh narrowed his eyes at that.

As he thought, these people had been trained.

As he thought, someone purposely sent this mountain of books to their house.

As he thought, someone purposely continued to prescribe those drugs to his mother.

There, the arrow reached Claugh's chest.

However, Claugh easily caught it.

—*You're special. After all, you're a special monster.*

He looked at the arrow that he grasped in his hand, before lifting his hand up and throwing it back.

Before the man who fired it could understand what was going on, the arrow pierced through his heart as he fell off his horse.

But Claugh didn't care about that.

Instead, looking down at his dead mother on the ground, he spoke.

"... The fact that you were able to escape was part of the experiment, Mom."

Though he didn't know the purpose, there was no doubt that the experiment was still continuing.

And Claugh was a part of it.

Who the heck was it that wanted to do something with him?

He didn't know anything about that, though it would be fine if that was the only problem.

The bigger problem was the feelings of his mother who'd drowned in drugs each day with a crying face, without noticing anything, wishing to be free.

"... It seems you were a pawn to the end,"

Claugh said to her corpse.

"....."

Of course, there was no response.

But he ignored that.

"So, you said you wanted revenge?"

"....."

"You wanted revenge against this cruel world?"

"....."

Her corpse didn't answer.

Without speaking, a curse was laid.

On herself.

On the world.

On her son.

Red, blue, and black.

Claugh smiled sadly at that. Crouching down, he closed the open eyes of his mother. Smoothing her messy hair, he prepared himself.

And he spoke.

"Revenge, huh? All right. Since I still haven't found the reason of my existence, I'll make that my reason. For you, Mom, even with those useless drugs, for Mom... I mean, I understand your desire to take revenge against this damn world..."

Claugh stood up. Then, heading to the kitchen, he opened a cupboard. Inside was a rusted knife. After taking it out, he spoke.

"Let's get revenge."

Claugh leapt out of the window.

Now that he was outside, he could see that there were seventeen bandits. The village had been completely slaughtered.

Houses had been set on fire, and all the women and children had been killed. And those guys noticed Clough. They called out to kill him.

But ignoring that, Clough looked around. The bandits were only sacrificial pawns. They weren't worth watching out for. Thus, ignoring the bandits' attack, Clough looked around restlessly.

This.

This—what was happening to the village—was part of the experiment.

"... So someone's watching from somewhere, right?"

He searched for that.

But a five-year-old child's ability to locate presences didn't amount to much. If somebody was watching, surely they had to be stronger than these bandits to be observing Claugh.

Maybe it was someone stronger than Claugh? If someone like that was watching him, then he wouldn't be able to find them.

"... Or else they wouldn't be watching, right?"

With that settled, it was time to decide his next move.

If someone was watching, then it was necessary to kill all the bandits for them to see. After all, it was undoubtedly an experiment to gauge Claugh's power. For the sake of luring in the enemy, it was necessary to let them see his power.

If there was nobody watching, then it was necessary to escape and then tail the bandits back to their headquarters.

To the enemy's whereabouts—to the whereabouts of the "that man", as his mother called him, that he had to exact revenge upon.

Now, which way.

Claugh searched his surroundings for a presence.

"....."

But he couldn't feel anything.

Was there nobody watching?

"Where are they?"

But he couldn't feel any presences.

In response, he took in a deep breath. He let it out. Again, he breathed in. He had to deliver oxygen to his brain. So that he could think clearly, he had to deliver lots of oxygen to his brain.

Now, to judge the situation. To judge it properly. Should he kill all the bandits? Or should he escape for now?

"....."

There, a bandit swung his sword. A sluggish movement. Asking if he wanted to die, he moved incredibly sluggishly.

Claugh readied his knife in response.

"I've decided. I'll kill them all..."

But then he stopped his movements.

That was because he heard a sound. The sound of numerous things quickly kicking the ground.

It was the sound of hooves. The sound of horses galloping.

At that, Claugh's thoughts again whirled around.

"What's going on?"

At the same time that he murmured that, a spear of light fired from somewhere pierced the chest of the man who raised his sword. A giant hole was left in his chest. Letting out a cry as his life ended, the man fell off his horse.

Claugh understood. Useable only by skilled spellcasters in the Roland army, that was the optical magic attack, **Kuuri**.

Claugh looked in the direction that the **Kuuri** was fired from. Over there, the vanguard of five men, dressed in Roland's military uniform, called out.

"Are you all right!? We'll arrest the bandits, so you escape!"

The military had come to save them.

The military had come to save this village that was attacked by bandits.

And those five men began to draw their next spells. **Kuuri**, **Izuchi**, **Kurenai**, **Misumi**, and **Homura**.

In an instant, they disposed of the bandits.

Before long, they approached Claugh, scanning their surroundings. At all of the dead villagers, and at the burning houses. And with mournful expressions, one spoke.

"... How awful... If only we'd arrived earlier..."

He descended from his horse. Crouching down, he peered at Claugh's face. He smiled kindly.

"... But at least there's one survivor. Are you all right?"

He spoke in a warm tone.

At that, Claugh looked as if he were about to cry. He made a crying face.

"... Mu, the village, my mother, everyone's been killed..."

"I understand. It's all right. You did your best. It's all right now. We came, so it's all right now."

Hugging Claugh, he said that. The man's body was warm; because of that, again, Claugh looked as if he were about to cry. No, he honestly did start crying.

"... I... It was scary—it was really scary..."

While crying, he said that.

If he didn't cry.

If he didn't cry, then he might burst out laughing.

The military came to save them.

They, who'd deserted the people in favour of being the nobles' dogs, came to save this village that'd been attacked by bandits.

And they were soldiers who could use **Kuuri**. They were soldiers who could use magic at a skill level that ordinary soldiers couldn't handle.

They were soldiers who used magic that those who hadn't received advanced training weren't able to use.

Aren't I lucky that these soldiers would come to save this small village!?

Thinking that, he felt like smiling sarcastically.

Geez, doesn't this scenario have a giant hole in it?

In other words, that was how it was.

These soldiers who'd come to save this village from bandits in order to win over Claugh—

"... However, to survive in this situation—you're amazing, aren't you?"

"... I-I was going to die... I was going to die at any rate..."

In order to win over Claugh so that he would cooperate and take part in their experiment.

"No, you really are amazing. We're searching for brave children like you, you know."

"... Brave?"

"That's right. Brave. Before we came here, you were going to face the bandits alone, weren't you?"

"... Yeah."

"To go up alone against your enemies is brave. We're searching for children like you."

"I'm brave?"

"That's right. That reminds me—why don't you come with us? Won't you come with us and work under our wise leader and serve this country?"

Regarding that,

"... M-Me, for this country...?"

While saying that, Claugh looked at the man's face. And then at his neck. And then at his carotid artery. He gripped his knife tightly.

I'll kill him, he thought.

I'll kill all five people here.

And again, he remembered his mother's words.

—You're a special child, after all.

Maybe so, Claugh thought.

For the first time, he was meeting with a user of the pride of Roland's offensive spells, **Kuuri**.

That level?

"Then, then I... can become your ally...?"

"Yes, that's right. That's our hope."

Maybe he could kill four of them and then torture the last one for information? No, that wasn't a good plan. That was a weak way of thinking. Judging from their actions, they hadn't come here to confirm that Claugh could single-handedly kill the bandits.

No, rather, it seemed that Claugh's worth was something else?

"Do you want to become our ally?"

"Sure!"

"Good, well said. You really are brave. A special child."

Special.

Special?

Born from his drug-addicted mother, a child of a special experiment.

What were the drugs prescribed to his mother? Drugs to increase her child's physical capabilities? Or drugs to increase his intelligence? But that wasn't what he got from these interactions. Considering these guys' skill level, he could be killed in an instant by them, it seemed?

Thinking about that, he gripped his knife. But the men didn't seem to notice that.

"Now then, will you come with us?"

With those words, it was the latter, Claugh thought.

The latter.

Claugh's worth wasn't that he was strong. It wasn't that he was smart. It was a different ability from those. Claugh didn't yet know what ability had been produced from the experiment.

And to know, Claugh had to cooperate on his own initiative. That was why he had to do this in a roundabout way.

That was why these guys didn't know if Claugh was stronger than them. Thinking about other abilities, they didn't know if Claugh was particularly smart.

Truly.

They didn't know if he truly was a special child.

This was a good situation, he thought.

If they thought he was weak, if they thought he was childish, then this situation was rather good.

He would get revenge.

Claugh smiled.

With a childish face, he smiled.

"I'll go with you!"

Smiling innocently, he said that.

◆

After giving his mother a burial—that is, burying her by a tree along with bottles of her beloved drugs—and picking one of the bandit's horses, he rode along with the vanguard to a strange location.

It was a large estate, and spread across in front of it was a maneuvering ground. There, several children were receiving training.

Upon arriving, Claugh was led away by the man. Holding Claugh, the man spoke in a kind tone.

"Well then, we're here. Starting from today, this is your home."

In response, Claugh looked up at the man.

"Here is my home?"

"Yeah. The **Emirel Private Forces**. Do you have any questions?"

"Nope."

Claugh shook his head.

However, he did actually have things he wanted to ask.

In his late mother's house, thin books about the **Emirel Private Forces** had been left behind.

This was a summary of what was written in them.

Created under the will of the noble Count Echroid Emirel, a charity organization.

Demolishing the wall between social classes, it gathers superior children and allows them to receive advanced training so that they may be brought up to serve this nation.

Those who graduate from the organization under the name of Count Emirel are able to gain high positions in Roland's army, become the highest of elites, obtain great power, and reach high levels of authority.

This power is for the sake of protecting this country.

This power is for the sake of protecting the people of this country.

Undefeated by the Special Institute #307, different from the private forces of other nobles, due to its high strength, this excellent organization continues to produce power for the sake of eternal happiness.

That is the Emirel Private Forces.

Such things were written.

In all hundred or so pages in the book, words of nobility and superiority and excellence were used repeatedly.

It was a book intended to brainwash foolish children into believing in the excellence of the **Emirel Private Forces**.

It was like a pamphlet trying to lure people into a rising religion.

Claugh had read through it.

However,

"... There's nothing I wanna ask,"

He answered so. He made a face as if he'd never read the books in his house. A face like he'd never bothered to read those difficult books.

The man looked at him, smiling. However, within that expression, the colour of slight disappointment arose, before it immediately vanished.

At that, a smile spread across Claugh's face. As he thought, the experiment was still continuing.

(I see, it seems that this child isn't as smart as we thought.)

That kind of expression.

At that, Claugh smiled.

Bastard, you're really the one who's not very smart.

He was an idiot.

Not allowing his thoughts to be revealed in his face, Claugh looked up at the man curiously.

Smiling, the man explained.

"Here is the magnificent Count Emirel-sama's..."

And so on and so forth. He talked about things Claugh already knew. Looking as if he were enthusiastically listening to him, Claugh ignored him while directing his attention to his surroundings.

At the training going on in the maneuvering ground.

At the movements of the instructors teaching the children.

At the way the children in the estate—who were considerably older than Claugh—moved. Looking at all that, he could estimate the place's skill level.

From the looks of it, no one was a threat to Claugh. Of course, it would be impossible against every single one of them at once, but if it were two or three people—well, it wasn't a problem.

So this is their level, he thought.

It was far less than what Claugh had expected.

This is responsible for the experiment.

This is the level of the organization responsible for Mom's suffering, Claugh thought.

—You're a special child, after all.

Again, he recalled his mother's words.

I see, I might really be special. At the very least, I have the power to kill everyone here.

"....."

After waiting for the man to finish, Claugh spoke.

"Then, then, I'm also going to be a part of the **Emirel Private Forces**?"

"Yeah. If you're eligible."

The idiot said.

"Then, then, can I also meet with the Count-sama ...?"

The man nodded.

"Of course. The Count-sama is fond of all the children here. Besides, you're also a superior child. He'll be coming here very soon to meet with you."

"I-Is that right? With me? The noble... Count-sama is?"

"That's right. But you mustn't be impolite."

"U-Understood."

Claugh put on the air of a foolish, nervous child. While putting on such an air, he thought, *This is gonna be easier to finish than I thought.*

Our wise, almighty leader.

The Count-sama who holds such excellent ideas.

The one he had to get revenge on... That man.

Once he met with him, it'd be easy to end his revenge.

He remembered his mother's words around the time of her death.

(Ahahahahahahaha... It doesn't hurt, because of the drugs, it doesn't hurt... Now, kill me! Kill me! But remember this: Clough will—to you, Clough will definitely...)

Clough will definitely kill you all.

"Not yet?"

While fidgeting, Clough said that.

The man smiled again.

"Soon."

"Not yet?"

Claugh said one more time. Once he came, he'd bring it all to an end. He'd go straight for Emirel's neck, cut through it with his hand, and pull out his windpipe. Continuing from there, if his guards came with him, he'd take care of them. At that time, the idiot would likely begin casting magic in a panic. That was their true level.

But it wouldn't be a problem.

People at that level wouldn't be a problem.

He'd kill them all.

Putting his mother on drugs. Laughing madly. Chasing the sound of despair. They who tried to place a curse on the world, he'd kill them all...

"....."

There, Clough stopped his line of thought.

People were descending from the second story.

He immediately knew who one of them was. Steeped white hair, eyes that dazzled with greed. A man with a tall and thin body who seemed to be in his forties. Donned in unsuitably fancy clothes.

He was clearly Count Emirel.

And he didn't seem like a threat at all. In one leap, he could jump towards him, cut through his neck, and everything would end with that.

But.

"....."

Claugh didn't move.

The problem was Emirel's surroundings.

Taking in the atmosphere of the four girls and boys who'd descended with Emirel as if to protect him, Clough wasn't able to move.

The age of the four people varied, but they seemed to be around 7~10 years older than Clough. They were still at an age where one could call them young boys and girls.

But the air they gave off was abnormal.

Emotionless faces. Sharp eyes. Flexible, trained bodies.

With only one look, he knew. To these guys, he wasn't a threat at all.

If he lifted a hand.

If he made one wrong move he'd be killed.

"....."

Damn it, why did I think there wouldn't be any problems?

Claugh didn't move.

Emirel looked at him. Then, he looked at the idiot at Clough's side, and,

"That's him?"

"Yes."

"I see, I see."

Emirel nodded, smiling happily. He looked down at Clough.

"Standing up alone against your enemies—you're a brave child, aren't you?"

Claugh nodded shakily.

"... Y-Yes, Count-sama."

"No need to be so tense. You're a chosen child, so I'm happy you could come. This is a strict place, but are you prepared to dedicate yourself to me and this country? Are you truly?"

"Yes."

"I see. Then let us welcome you. You will become strong here. And you will serve me and serve this country."

"Understood."

"If you become strong, then your livelihood is guaranteed. This is a privileged class here. Wouldn't you say that it's wonderful?"

Claugh nodded at that.

"... Um, I'm still a child, so it's hard for me to understand everything... But I want to work hard to repay the Count-sama for saving my life from the bandits. And I understand that this is an amazing opportunity for someone of my standing. So please use my life as you wish, Count-sama."

Again, Emirel smiled happily, nodding.

"Smart child."

"Thank you."

"Then, you are formally welcomed into the **Emirel Private Forces**. Become strong, and become of use to me."

"Understood."

"Then I look forward to the day when we meet again."

Emirel looked down at Clough with the eyes of someone who'd just bought a new toy. Like a racehorse owner who'd just bought a new horse.

A rich person's hobby.

But from within that hobby...

That such monsters were born, Clough was inwardly awed. The boys and girls who stood around Emirel.

It seemed that their circumstances were the same as Clough, in that they were brought to this place.

He'd have to wait for a bit before he could kill them and wrap his hands around Emirel's throat.

He'd have to become stronger...

"....."

There, Emirel turned on his heel. Of the four guards, only three went with him.

And the remaining girl looked down at Clough. A cruel smile spread across her face.

"Haha, 'so please use my life as you wish, Count-sama'? In that case, will you give up your life right here?"

Claugh then looked up at her. She seemed to be about seven or eight years older than him. So twelve or thirteen years old, then. She was still a young girl. Contrasting with her childish face, her expression was that of an adult's. And above all, what caught his eye the most was her long, pure white hair.

Though claiming her hair was just white was a bit off. Completely white, it was if it'd lost all pigmentation.

And the meaning behind that, Clough knew. He'd read about it in a book.

She'd been through an experiment.

It seemed to be that kind of study.

A magic circle had been buried into her brain.

What the result was, surgeons didn't quite know. There were people who'd acquired abnormally high mental abilities, those who acquired tenacious minds, as well as people who'd acquired power that surpassed their body's limits.

But the brains of almost everyone who'd gone through the experiment ruptured and they died.

The success rate was less than one in ten thousand.

In other words, this was that sort of place.

A place that experimented on people's bodies and produced monsters.

Claugh looked up at the girl.

"You are?"

"I'm Rei Stokkart. You are Claugh Klom. Yes, no need to introduce yourself to me. Then, shall we go?"

Saying that, Rei began to walk.

At that, Claugh—

"To where?"

Without turning around, Rei spoke.

"To where? Aha, what a cute question. But it's a stupid one, so I won't answer. You won't survive long here like that."

"....."



In response, Claugh stared at her back. As far as he could tell, there weren't any openings.



And as he was unable to find any openings as he watched her back, that meant there wasn't any chance he was someone superior in this place.

Rei steadily advanced deeper into the building.

Moving further and further into darkness.

Claugh didn't know at all what lay within that darkness, but,

"... Superiority, huh?"

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Please hurry up. Are you prepared to throw away your life?"

Saying that, Rei laughed. A cold laugh.

Regarding that, Claugh stared into the darkness,

"....."

And slowly followed her inside.

◆

Their destination was an incredibly large, square room. For Claugh to run from one end to another at full power would take perhaps about ten seconds. And everywhere that he could see on the room's ground, walls, and ceiling, sinister magic circles had been drawn.

As for what all of this was,

"... A test site,"

Claugh murmured.

No, that was probably so.

Looking around the room, there were a little over a hundred children playing. All of them were victims of experiments or sacrifices?

Claugh looked up at Rei who brought him here.

However, she laughed as she looked down at him.

"Even if you look at me with those eyes, I'm not giving you any information. After all, none of the other children here have obtained any, so why should you receive any favours? But I'll tell you just two things. Well, they're things everyone here has been told. All of these children are like you. They've all undergone treatment. Secondly, the chances that you won't be accepted are zero. Understand?"

"....."

At that, Claugh's expression became disappointed.

Understand? She'd asked, but he couldn't grasp her words at all.

That all the children here had undergone treatment like Claugh—what did that mean? Did that mean, like Claugh, all of them had been born from drug-filled mothers?

If they were the same... then what did it mean to be a special child?

What did it mean to be special? It didn't seem like it meant to have high intelligence or high physical capabilities. It didn't seem like it was that kind of treatment.

In other words, right now was treatment for the sake of going through with the experiment. But what was that?

And so Claugh stopped thinking about that. It was impossible to predict that with the information he had on hand.

That was why he thought about something else she'd said.

"The chances that you won't be accepted are zero."

What did that mean?

Then, Rei spoke.

"Now then, please go already. From here on, this is where you'll be staying."

"Here?"

"Correct. This is where you'll be staying for a little while."

"And you, Rei?"

Again, Rei laughed.

"Me... who knows? Either way, I doubt we'll meet again..."

"Eh, what's with that? But isn't that weird? Then, why did someone strong like Rei lead me here? There are other people, so why you, Rei?"

At the question, Rei suddenly raised her eyebrows. And she laughed. It was a more cheerful laugh than before, as smile tinged with madness arose in her face.

"My, my... Out of a hundred and six children, you're the first to ask that... Could it be that your childish behaviour up until now was an act?"

Looking at Claugh, who tilted his head with a clueless expression, and still smiling,

"Well, it's fine... Your question is amusing, so I'll tell you a little. Why I was the one to lead you here... If you're to meet with me again afterwards, I'll be your instructor. This is my laboratory, after all,"

She said that.

To that, Claugh looked up at her, and,

"... Rei's laboratory?"

"Correct."

"Is that right?"

"Yes."

I see, Claugh muttered in his heart one more time.

"Then, if I achieve good results, we'll be able to meet again?"

After a dark smile arose in Rei's face, as if she could see straight into Claugh's heart—

"Good results... huh? Correct. That's correct, Claugh."

"Then I'll work hard."

"Fufufu. Yes, work hard. Then, I'll be going."

"Right! I'll work hard!"

"Please do so,"

Rei said, and then left.

As she left the room, the steel door closed. With a *kachan* sound, the lock turned.

The testing site—no, Rei's laboratory, as she said—either way, the strange area, filled with magic circles, was closed.

And just now, as the door closed, Claugh felt something in the air change. It became slightly heavy. The temperature noticeably rose by a few degrees.

In that instant.

In the corner of the room, there was some kind of an explosion.

The impact caused several children to be blown off.

"What is it?"

Claugh looked in its direction.

And,

"....."

His eyes widened. His jaw dropped in surprise. In the room, he saw flames start to dance.

However, the explosion of fire wasn't a normal fire.

Then, what?

What are those flames over there?

Claugh saw.

Over there was a raging monster.

It was literally fire.

A raven of fire.

Like something from a fairy tale, a raven of fire.

The raven was attacking the children.

The fire was attacking the children.

And it—

Killed them.

Killed them.

Killed them.

Its movements were quick.

Its movements were abnormally quick.

It was so quick that Claugh was just barely able to follow it with his eyes.



If he were to be attacked, he wouldn't be able to fight back.

But one by one, the fire raven attacked the children in the room.

"No, that's not it,"

Claugh muttered.

The fire raven wasn't attacking the children.

From child to child.

From each child's mouth to another child's mouth, it entered.

Like a parasite, it entered each children; however, in the end, it destroyed the child's organs as the child erupted, and so the fire raven flew out.

And again, to the next child.

Like a parasite searching for the perfect host, the fire raven went from child to child.

Staring intently that sight, Claugh scowled.

And he recalled the words that Rei said.

—*The chances that you won't be accepted are zero.*

Those words.

"Hey, hey, haaa!? Whaaaaat!? Don't tell me that girl was talking about being accepted by this monster!?"

Claugh yelled in a despairing voice.

Over there.

The fire raven turned towards him. Immediately, it flew over to him.

"Uwa, faaast,"

Claugh moaned. If it were to attack, he wouldn't be able to evade. But if he couldn't evade it,

"Damn it."

If he couldn't evade it, then he'd die.

Claugh jumped to the right.

However, the raven easily responded to that. Changing its path to where Claugh was headed, it aimed for his mouth.

"Damn iiiit!"

In the moment that the fire raven was about to enter the mouth with which he called out,

"This way,"

Claugh's arm was pulled away by something.

"Huh?"

Claugh said as he was forcibly pulled to the left. Thanks to that, the fire raven missed Claug's mouth.

And so, the fire raven moved to the mouth of the child behind Claug.

And it entered that mouth.

To the next mouth.

To the next mouth.

Its targets were those around Claug instead.

It seemed that Claug had just barely managed to survive.

To confirm that, he turned around. He looked at the one who'd saved him.

There, around the same age as Claug, was a boy.

Long white hair that'd lost its pigmentation. Precocious, calm eyes like an adult's.

Those eyes stared at him, and,

"Ahh, that was close, wasn't it?"

He said, and in this hellish situation, he smiled. With an annoyingly serene face, he smiled.

In response, Claug—

"Don't just go 'ahh'. Who the hell are you?"

"Me? I'm Luke Stokkart."

He introduced himself like that.

At that, Claug frowned further. Stokkart. Stokkart. Stokkart.

It was the same name of the strange girl with the unpleasant face who'd brought him here just a while ago.

Come to think of it, this guy's hair was also white. In other words,

"You're that Rei girl's younger brother?"

He asked; however, Luke made a somewhat thoughtful face, and,

"... Rei? Ah, that girl who brought us here. Not at all. We're just from the same experiment... but right now, that's not important. This isn't the time to be talking about that. More importantly, how about being saved?"

In response to those words, Claug looked at Luke. And then he looked at the fire raven that rampaged inside the room. It still hadn't found what it was looking for, and so continued to attack the children. And the number of children within the room was evidently decreasing.

It was only a matter of time before the fire raven went after Claug again.

There was no time to waste.

They were running out of time.

Looking at Luke again, Claugh—

"What, you've got a plan?"

To the question, Luke again smiled calmly.

"Of course. Because you... you're the strongest one in this room, I've chosen you. So, do you want to go along with my plan?"

Claugh shrugged at those words.

Then he watched the fire raven that continued to attack the children within the sealed room.

But no matter how hard Claugh wracked his brain, he couldn't think of a solution.

But this brat.

This strangely calm brat claimed to have a plan to get through this. This brat with white hair unsuited for his age told him that.

And that was.

"....."

And that was rather pleasant, he thought.

To the Claugh who'd spent day after day being beaten by his mother and finding each day tedious, he felt that that was rather pleasant.

That was why a smile spread across Claugh's face.

A cheerful smile spread.

"Geez, this monster's an idiot, isn't it?"

After saying that, he gathered up power within his entire body. In his fingertips. In his toes. He prepared all of his nerves.

And he spoke.

"Then, give me your orders, Luke Stokkart. Though I don't know how much power you have, it's fine. Let's hear your plan."

At that, Luke smiled again.

Claugh also smiled a little.

And then.

"....."

Then the two, at the fire raven rampaging within the room, stared intently.

